Kipling's Depiction of the Great Game between British India and Czarist Russia

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Abstract:

This article provides valuable information about the living conditions of Muslims of the Pak-Afghan Region in the context of revisiting Rudyard Kipling's view of the Great Game of the 19th century between Great Britain and Russia that roughly continued for about a century beginning in the second decade of the 19th century to the signing of the Anglo Russian convention in 1907. In this respect his famous novel, Kim (1901) has been critically examined to establish the political content of his creative work. Coupled with the appreciation of the novel as a great work of art with its many facets and themes, views of Edward Said have been juxtaposed to arrive at a conclusion that the novel is also a celebration of imperialism. In today's scenario in Central Asia particularly Afghanistan, a revisit of Kipling is an interesting revelation. The discussion also reveals the similarities of the tussle of two centuries back to the realities in the region today. This insight as we appreciate Kipling's masterpiece novel proves even more eye-catching and real. This paper also examines Peter Hopkirk's works on the Great Game to historically asses the dialectics of the imperial struggle between the two super powers of the time. In this connection, a brief discussion is available on the three Anglo-Afghan Wars as well as the conflict in Kashgharia. This article presents an overview of the view head by Russians on the conflict which they call Tournament of Shadows or Bolshya Igra involving spies and military personnel. A fresh look at Kipling's works in general and his novel Kim, in particular, helps explore the very essentials of the working of Imperialism and empire-building, which is the main stay of this paper. A deeper look would understandably unfurl big powers rivalry in general, and the present day security situation in Asia in particular, by going through the works of a great writer; the first Englishman and the youngest recipient for Nobel Prize in Literature (1907).

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Introduction:

Contemporary discourse on terrorism, with particular reference to Afghanistan, ironically though, seems incomplete without a direct or indirect reference to the Great Game of the 19th Century between Russia and England, a tussle for supremacy in Asia. This aspect of security, peace and conflict compels analyst, historian, and strategist alike, to mention Rudyard Kipling and his works, particularly the novel Kim, and some amazingly relevant poems, if not in detail, compulsorily in passing, abundantly proves his relevance in today's political and literary landscape. So, no escaping to Kipling and the *Great Game*. This article, in greater detail focuses on his perspective of the Imperial struggle about two centuries ago, by revisiting the power tussle and its political narrative

The *Great Game* also led to armed conflict with Afghanistan, a landlocked but strategically important country which ultimately emerged as a buffer zone between the two rivals. The British went to war with Afghanistan in 1838, 1878 and 1915 respectively to ensure that it remains in its specific sphere of influence. The same is also true of Tibet and the *Kashgharia* which territorially lay within the Chinese fold despite the British Tibetan expedition in 1858. Russia's colonization of Central Asia, during the latter half of the 19th century, was drawn by the same colonial commitments and exigencies as its rival Britain.

Kipling, *Kim* and The *Great Game:*

Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901), is the story of its main protagonist Kimball O, Hara or Kim and his training as a spy or a great gamer. He is picked by Mehbub Ali, groomed by Hurree Chunder Babu and trained by Lurgan *Sahib* and Col. Creighton. In the process, he attains the status of a *Sahib* from a street boy whose only asset is his daring and street wisdom. *Kim* (1901) is Kipling's most important and famous work, written in the Indian setting. It revolves around the *Great Game*, the commonly accepted term for the power politics in the 19th Century between the Victorian Britain and Czarist Russia. The novel is also about identity, culture and race and is considered to be the best novel of Anglo-India written none other than by an Anglo-Indian himself. The main thrust of the work is imperialism and its manifestation, with its self-indulgent narrative telling of the shadowy war of diplomacy and espionage, which somehow eclipses its literary beauty, even making the novel controversial as its main character Kimball O'Hara emerges as one of the most focused protagonists in English literature. The *Great Game* or the *Victorian Cold War* is a symbol of undercover tactics and intelligence gathering, to help protect the British Indian colony, *the Jewel in the English Crown*, from outside encroachment. Russia, which was speedily colonizing Central Asia, was considered a real threat. In these circumstances, the question of frontier and its problems arose robustly.

Prominent colonist, Lord Curzon, presented his famous thesis, in the *Romance Lectures* (1902) that highlights its dynamics to benefit the policy makers. Additionally many a policy apparatus was designed to ensure an impregnable barrier particularly to the North West of the colony.

Play of The Jewels:

It is the mental exercise devised by Lurgan for the probationer spies also referred to as the *Jewel Game*. The game involves the master spy Lurgan Sahib, his boy servant and the hero Kim, during his initiation as an intelligent operative, though *Kim* is a born spy, given his extraordinary talent, mental alertness, his genius for guises and the shadowy profile that he carries on the streets of Lahore. The proposition presented by the mysterious manipulator, Lurgan Sahib, poses a real challenge to his young mind. The game begins, when Lurgan presents a tray full of jewels, a kind of chess game, to be played by the three in an amazingly absorbing way. Lurgan emphasizes that it should be done many times till perfection is achieved. Kipling's creativity is immense, and by presenting such a training session in the novel, he had provided many with inspiration, in which the founder of the Scouting Movement, Baden-Powell could be the most prominent. This particular game is played with different objects to help alert the minds of the gamers and invoke in their persons the aptitude which is considered a must for espionage and reconnaissance.

> They contest the game many times, sometimes with jewels, sometimes with odd objects, and sometimes with photographs of people. It is considered a vital part of training in observation. It happens many times over till it is done perfectly - for it is worth doing.[1]

Kim's kid game at Lurgan's house is a preparation for his role as a future spy. One event or a chance incident leads to another till his modest journey from the streets of Lahore leads him to studies at top English school, the St. Xavier's and his future role as a colonist is ensured.

In the novel, an element of chance and coincidence has been introduced, though not very skilfully, particularly when Kim convinces the sagacious Lama to undertake mission *Great Game* by going to Umballa. The Lama serves a perfect cover for Kim who delivers an important piece of information to the army high command at the Army Headquarters. Since Kim is used by Mehbub Ali as an informer, the presence of Lama with him on the journey makes his job easier. The young boy even persuades him to go to the Himalayas with him, where he would find his *River of Deliverance* and would get rid of the *wheel of life.*

Mehbub Ali, a Pakhtun the only influential friend Kim had before he becomes friendly with the Englishmen and attains the status of a *Sahib*, is, in fact, a documented spy and is properly registered for the purpose as C25 Intelligence Bureau. He pays and feeds him good food in return for providing information on unconcerned strangers coming to the *Kashmir Serai* but does not disclose identity as agent. However, Kim is cunning enough to know that

Mehbub is much more than a horse trader. This we come to know when the credentials of the intelligence operative are detailed by the writer.

> But Kim did not suspect that Mehbub Ali, known as one of the best horse-dealers in the Punjab… was registered in one of the locked books of the Indian Survey Department as C25 IB. Twice or thrice yearly C25 would send in a little story. This time it is an interesting one about some princely states inviting Russian spies to get support against British Rule.

Kim becomes part of the whole business when this piece of information is handed over to him for onward submission to some Englishmen who is interested in the pedigree of a certain white horse.

When Kim takes to the Grand Trunk Road on the mission to the Himalayas, he meets another spy, E-23 in the train. E-23 has escaped from the South of India with a letter, via the city of Chitor. Kim not only successfully covers up the undercover spy, code name, E23, but creates an awe in the minds of the on-lookers, the passengers in the train including the lama who is all praise for his disciple. Tied in a solemn oath of brotherhood, on the pattern of freemasonry that would be discussed in Chapter Three, the spy leaves the scene and escapes his tormentors where from he had fled with some important information. "I am only a beginner at the Game that is sure'.[2] He enjoys the game and does not like loss of concentration, and hope "to play the *Great Game*."[3]His newly established role as a sahib and as a *Great Game* player rendered him very grave and wise beyond years. "But I want to know,' said Kim, laughing. 'If it is the Game, I may help. How can I do anything if you bukh [babble] all round the shop?" [4] He does not spare even his superiors, Mehbub Ali and Hurree Babu, when it comes to professional commitments. The climax of the story comes when Kim fights with the two Russian spies in order to get important document, secured in a kilta or a bag. 'It is a kilta with a red top full of very wonderful things, not to be handled by fools.'[5]It is interesting to note that both Kim and his master Lama have no emotional interest in women. It is understandable in the latter's case, but for the young English boy, quite disturbing. Maybe his mission in life was more important than some petty affairs, sharing the writer's perceptions with reference to work, duty and character. 'How can a man follow the Way or the *Great Game* when he is so-always pestered by women?'[6]

Kipling forewarns the fatal consequences of the *Great Game*. "When everyone is dead, the *Great Game* is finished. Not before."[7]

The Colonial Chessboard:

The Anglo-Russian rivalry of the 19th century was like a game of chess wherein kings and pawns move. In this case Russia and Britain are the kingpins while small nations like Afghanistan, the Central Asian Khanates and Tibet are the pawns. But it is much more than that given the bloody conflict with Afghanistan and the expedition in Tibet.

The Genesis of the *Great Game*:

Coined by Connolly and introduced in the mainstream by Kipling, the term, *Great Game* was institutionalized by Lord Curzon. The expansionist design of the contending nations sought supremacy in Afghanistan which almost led to a war between the two Empires when the Russians captured Panjdeh in 1885. The two Anglo-Afghan wars of 1838 and 1878 were aimed to curb the increasing Russian influence in the region, more so in Kabul.

The British were so greatly obsessed with the specter of Russian domination of Afghanistan that they risked two bloody and disastrous wars by launching *Shah Shujah* (1803-1809 and 1839-1842)[8], a pensioner of the East India Company, as the Amir of Afghanistan overthrowing *Dost Mohammad* (1793-1863)[9]. This opened the Great Game drama, casting dark shadows on the future of Afghanistan. The events also proved diplomatic failure on the part of British India, to hold its sway in Central Asia. Keeping this in view, Kipling's *Kim* is constructed to emphasize the importance of India. The protagonist Kim, supported by the Babu, outwits and overpowers the Russian spies amid "ending snows, land slips, blocked passes, the remote cliffs where men find sapphires and turquoise".[10]In a situation risen from the scuffle between Kim involving his guru, the Lama and the two agents, the Kilta is removed. "Kim titled the Kilta on the floor- a cascade of survey- instruments, books, diaries, letters, maps and queerly scented native correspondence. At the very bottom was an embroidered bag covering a sealed, gilded and illuminated document such as one king sends to another.[11]

The *Great Game* could roughly be time lined in three phases, "from the beginning of the nineteenth century till the First Anglo-Afghan War, 1939-42, and the period up to the Second Anglo-Afghan War, 1878-80 and the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907."[12]The Anglo-Russian rivalry of the later 19th century has been a favourite topic with writers, historians and commentators of all denominations. Each holds his own thesis to the challenges faced by both Russia and England ensuring supremacy in the region.

Anwar Khan, in his book, *England, Russia and Central Asia - A Study in Diplomacy* (1962), while discussing the power politics of Central Asia with reference to Afghanistan and Kashgharia, notes.

> In order to find its way, the Czars of Russia relied on diplomatic missions to the adjoining small and big powers.' Between the years 1857 and 1859, three Russian missions were dispatched to four Oriental courts. N. V.Khanikov visited Herat in 1858-1859. Captain Ch. Valikhanov was sent to Kashghar, and N.P. Ignatiev was ordered to proceed to Khiva and Bokhara. This alarmed the British in India whose fear of encirclement or the eventual invasion of India from the North, further deepened.[13]

Elaborating on this aspect, he notes:

> The main Russian thesis, that imperial necessity demanded a stable frontier, could not be gainsaid. Also, it had to be conceded that, while the British had pushed forward into the fertile, heavily populated areas of Punjab, the Russians had merely been absorbing the rotting khanates of the Central Asian desert, where law and order, or civilization in any form, was lacking[14].

Swinson traces back the clash of interests between Russia and England with respect to Persia in the background of the Napoleon's spectre in Asia.

> It was England in 1814 which aborted Russian effort to sign a treaty with Persia. British policy at this time was pusillanimous, to say the least, and the Persians came to the conclusion that their best course was to try to compensate their losses in the west by attacking Afghanistan to the east. In this enterprise they were encouraged by the Russians, and in due course the plan crystallized into a campaign against Herat, the Afghan town standing on the western flank of the Hindu Kush and guarding the road to Kandahar and India.[15]

This means that the whole issue was rooted in the importance of the East, in the European context.

> The root of the Eastern Question can be traced to the Vienna Conference of 1815 convened after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte; its purpose was to establish a settlement in Europe. From then on, the British felt the Russian threat replacing the French threat in the East, especially in connection with India.[16]

China having its own sphere of influence in Kashgharia, and Persian interest in the strategically important city of Herat, further deepened its complexity. The growing importance of Persia in the defence of India against expanding Russia in Central Asia was giving way to a conciliatory attitude towards the former state.'[17]

After the failure of British incursion in Kashgharia, and the two unsuccessful wars with Afghanistan and the consequent loss of prestige of British India, the situation demanded immediate reconsideration of ties between Russia and England. Resultantly, diplomacy took over.

> The problem of Afghanistan in this context was Britain's own creation. Britain had a vital strategic interest in Afghanistan as a buffer state for India, but to maintain this buffer necessitated direct and active influence in Afghan affairs; this influence was not forthcoming and instead she adopted the policy of "Masterly Inactivity."[18]

However, it took both the empires quite long to finally reach a settlement in 1907. Many border agreements were reached and the boundaries of Afghanistan were demarcated with mutual understanding.

> Unlike his previous pronouncement, this was undoubtedly true, and the British Government knew it. No diplomatic smooth talk,

> not even the agreement regarding the Afghanistan boundaries, reached in 1873, could blind them to reality; to the fact that the jousting with Russia in Central Asia, 'the ***Great Game***' as it was called in press, was fast reaching its climax.[19]

Russia feeling contented with the colonizing of its near-abroad, and England retaining Afghanistan in its fold of influence, things began to settle so far as the game plan was concerned. The main actors demarcated, redistributed and relocated boundaries to secure their interests. The brunt of the tussle was mainly borne by Afghanistan, the Central Asian Khanates and Tibet.

> Interestingly, though the term *Great Game* was altogether a British concoction and it has evolved in the overall context of imperialist design to overtake her rival, the Czarist Russia. The *Great Game* was the outcome of British imperial design in Asia coupled with the fear of Russian and Russians as competitors in the race for supremacy in Asia. 'He (Connolly) raised no cry about the Russian advances in Central Asia because he believed that the Russians were impelled to advance by causes similar to those, which had impelled the British advance from Calcutta to Peshawar.[20]

Connolly and Rawlinson were important figures during this crucial period of Anglo-Russian relationship and for them, the tussle between the two was a noble one. Connolly wrote;

> You've a great game, a noble one, before you"; and, in another letter: "If only the British Government would play the grand game."[21]"Regarding the term Tournament of Shadow, Peter Hopkirk in the Great Game (1990) as well as Meyer and Bryssc in *Tournament of Shadow (1999)* associate it with the Russians during the colonization of Central Asia but interestingly the writer of this work credits a former Russian Foreign Minister in power at the height of the Great Game, 'In 1837, Count Nesselrode, Russian Foreign Minister from 1822 to 1856, had created another highly appropriate term for this conflict, 'Tournament of Shadows', but it was the 'Great Game' that caught the popular imagination...[22]The *Great Game* was a story of personalities, of whom the most visible were the men on the spot… Younghusband, for his appalling massacre of Tibetans in 1904.[23] "If there was a 'game', it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Russians played it rather better than their competitor. The Russian completed the Trans Caspian Railway line while the British Indian Government was not sure to compete till they realized that *Hunza* and *Chitral* were threatened that they started planning improved communications with these distant regions.[24]

Hopkirk's View:

Peter Hopkirk's books *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (1992), *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road* (1980), *Trespassers on the Roof of the World* (1982), *Setting the East Ablaz*e (1984), *The Great Game*, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* (1994) and *Quest for Kim* (1996) are undoubtedly the most relevant source material on the *Great Game*. There are really exciting works and no study on the subject is complete without them. It is a story of the spy war involving 'intrepid young officers eager to risk their lives beyond the frontier'.[25] This story of adventure and heroism has a large cast. It includes more than a hundred individuals, and embraces at least three generations'.[26] Hopkirk attempts to find the root of the Russo-Britain rivalry in the European contest. With the inclusion of Russia in the conflict, the Russophobia takes flight and becomes one of the crucial policy contents of the British Indian policies towards Central Asia. 'It was no secret in London and Calcutta that Napoleon had long had his eye on India.'[27] 'Whereas the Russians by themselves might not present much of a threat, the combined armies of Napoleon and Alexander were very different matters, especially if led by a soldier of the former's undoubted genius.'[28]He notes that there was not much logic in the Russophobe argument that Russia is going to invade India probably through Afghanistan or the Pamirs any time soon. He calls it a 'bogey'.

Quest for Kim - In Search of Kipling's Great Game (1996) is inspired by his extraordinary interest in all things *Great Game* and its magic spell, with special reference to *Kim*. The odyssey almost unmasked the romance of the novel, tracing the roots of all its characters in real life which Kipling might have come across or known. The author witchhunts the facts beyond the fiction. At the end, however, the mystery gets deeper and fiction courts reality. Its beauty and magic could be placed at par with that of Kipling's own masterpiece novel, *Kim*. Hopkirk endeavors to visit all the places mentioned in the novel, from the *Ajaib Ghar*, to watching the *Zamzamah* with delight and later on to Simla, the summer capital of British India. He attempts to follow the route and footprints of the protagonists Hurree Babu and Tesho Lama. Mehboob Ali, Col: Creighton and of course Kimbal O' Harra

As mentioned earlier, the players in the game included colonial personnel as well as local employees of the *Raj*. The roots of exploration and intelligence gathering lie in the beginning of the 19th Century.

> In 1823, Mountstuart Elphinstone published his book of travels which was virtually to become a textbook on Afghanistan. In 1819 two more Englishmen, Moorcroft and Trebeck, set out on a journey of exploration which was to last six years; and they were followed by a Scot, Edward Sterling, who was serving in the Bengal Civil Service, then Arthur Connolly, a cavalry officer. But their accounts stirred up little interest and were soon forgotten. It was Burnes who arrived at the right time, when the thrill of exploration was in the air and the Russian advance

> across the Central Asian desert, had brought Afghanistan into the news.[29]

The story of the *Great Game* seems incomplete without mentioning George Curzon, a staunch Russophobe, who traveled to Central Asia and warned on the Russian military preparation for the invasion of India. The British were overawed by the idea of Napoleon of France and Czar Alexander, joining hands to get the *Jewel*. Therefore all possible routes to India were diligently watched and agents were sent far and wide to gather information and comb the areas for possible Russian agents.

> Lieutenant Francis Younghusband of the 1stKing's Dragon Guards seemed to possess all the virtues required by a romantic hero of those times... By the age of 28 he would be a veteran of the game, sharing the confidences of men in high places with whom few subalterns ever came into contact.[30]

The playing area in addition to Afghanistan included in and around the present day *Gilgit Bultistan* Province of Pakistan, most importantly *Hunza* and *Leh*, *Chitral* and *Kashmir* not yet fully controlled by either side. Like Connolly and Younghusband, other great gamers too, met tragic ends, 'Lone traveller, the enterprising Scottish trader Andrew Dalgleish, had been brutally hacked to death while on his way to Yarkand'[31] in search of glory on 'The lonely trail across the mountains between Leh and Yarkand'[32]on task assigned to Younghusband, 'Colonel Algerion Durand, the then Governor of Chitral, reflected with satisfaction, 'The *Great Game* has begun'.[33]

The *Great Game* was not fiction but a deadly war, fought by men of great human courage, who hated to look back. On both sides, the fear was genuinely felt at such dangerous places like Tibet, Pamir, Bokhara and Afghanistan. Hopkirk concludes, 'But to Burnes and the Pottingers, Burnaby and Rawlinson, it seemed real enough and ever present. Indeed, India's history appeared to bear out their fears.'[34] The same is also true of the Russian who had taken it as a great challenge. 'Equally, men like Kaufman and Skobelev, Alikhanov and Grombchevsky, feared that unless they staked Russia's claim to the Central Asian khanates, the British would eventually absorb these into their Indian empire.'[35]

Bolshaya Igra:

I came across the term *Bolshya Igra* in Peter Hopkrik's fascinating book *The Great Game - On Secret Service in High Asia*. He also mentions that among the Russians the term Great Game had no currency.'[36]...Having no convenient phrase of their own for it, some even refer to the struggle as the *Bolshya Igra* ('***Great Game***').[37].

> The fear of a Russian attack from the North has been a constant element in defining the policies of British India in the region. Orders were hastily issued for the routes by which an invader might reach India to be thoroughly explored and mapped, so that it could decide by the Company's defense chiefs where best he

> might be halted and destroyed. At the same time diplomatic missions were dispatched to the *Shah of Persia* and the *Emir of Afghanistan*, through whose domains the aggressor would have to pass, in the hope of discouraging them from entering into any liaisons with the foe.[38]

Rosanne Klass finds the roots of Russian intervention in the Indian sub-continent beyond the 19th century.

> Soviet control over and manipulation of the *Baluchis*, their encouragement and support for *Baluchi* nationalism started in the mid seventeenth century as part of the *Great Game*.'[39]Historically the Russians have always strived to reach the so-called warm water of the Persian Gulf and in the wake of their colonization of Central Asia in 19th Century, it almost materialized. 'Kipling called it. : The *Great Game* "…. Russia's pursuit of access to the Indian Ocean and control of the Indian subcontinent, which began at least as early as 1791, when invasion plans were drawn up under Catherine the Great, and British efforts to foil it.[40]

Anwar Khan refers to Russia's focus on Central Asia, expanding its domain over the decadent Khanates.

> The year 1857 is significant in the history of Central Asia because Russia, beaten in the Balkans, turned towards the conquest of Turkistan. It is also important that in 1857-1858, the British Crown took direct responsibility of the Government of India. By the year 1878 Russia was a power paramount in the whole of Central Asia.'[41]Both the contending empires tried to protect their interests by colonization and consolidating their respective position where they had no direct administrative control. The Russian were considered to be more successful in colonizing Central Asia, given their ruthlessness in comparison to the British tactics of alliances and "shows of pageantry." This view is shared by Curzon who considered the Russian to be closer to the natives than the British who do not mix with inferior races.[42]

AFGHANISTAN - THE PERFECT PAWN

History and Location:

Ahmad Shah emerged as the undisputed leader of Afghans in 1747after gaining independence from the Persians. He began to consolidate its boundaries and at one time, the power of the Afghan Empire extended up to *Kashmir*, *Sindh* and the Punjab. However, after his death, till the arrival of Dost Muhammad to the throne of Afghanistan in 1826, the country had not gone to war with any power, though internally it had been involved in many dynastic wars and tribal conflicts. It was the fateful era of the so-called *Great Game*, during which the

Afghans confronted the British Empire, Driven by the fear of Czarist expansionist design in the Central Asia and with a view to secure its western frontier, Afghanistan was attacked on flimsy grounds. Lord Auckland justified the invasion of Afghanistan, in order to install a ruler loyal, to British interest viz-a-viz. the Russians. Hence the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-42). However, the adventure proved a disaster for the British while they continued to rule the country with their puppet, Shah Shuja. The War was followed by what is called 'The Victorian Revenge' when the 'Army of Retribution' entered Kabul and destroyed life and property at will. Ironically, Dost Mohammad was restored to the throne of Kabul. It took the British almost forty years to invade Afghanistan once more and this time against Sher Ali. In this conflict too, the British suffered the most. However, a result of the 2nd Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80), the British succeeded to bring it in their fold. The state of affair was accepted by the rival power Russia, for the time being, at least. After a lull of about twenty years, the Afghans once more clashed with the British but this time they took the offensive and in 1919, the Third Anglo-Afghan war begun. It actually lasted about three months. King Amanullah took credit for making the country truly sovereign as a result of the Treaty of Rawalpindi in 1919, in which the British agreed to relinquish their control over the foreign policy of Afghanistan. The last war is actually the War of Independence for the Afghans and they celebrate 15th August as their day of independence.

> The Russians however, only dawdled; they did not offer the Amir any affirmative reply, but they conducted talks and drafted new agreements without committing themselves to a war with Britain. In truth, the Russians had never decided to aid Afghanistan against a British attack, because they did not want to be involved in such a war.[43]

Despite hectic diplomatic activities by the players in game, coupled with trade initiatives and intelligence gatherings in the struggle, no moral hiccups by either could deny each other, their imperial interest as long as these do not come in conflict.

> Both the Afghans and the Russians were given to understand that Britain would not tolerate Russian predominance in Afghanistan. This policy worked out very well throughout the British rule in India, but it also meant that Russia was permitted to do much as she pleased north of the Hindu Kush.[44]

Afghanistan caught up in big power rivalry during this period in its history agreed to the delineation of its territory which Swinson calls, The End of the Game.

> Anglo-Russian relations with regard to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet were discussed amicably and at length; and in August 1907 a Convention was signed in St. Petersburg covering all major points of difference. Persia was divided into spheres of influence; the Russians declared Afghanistan as outside her sphere, and agreed not to send agents to Kabul. All her dealings

> with the Amir would be passed through the British Government. On their part, the British undertook not to annex or occupy any part of Afghanistan or to interfere in the internal administration of the country. The ***Great Game*** was over.[45]

The Afghans at War:

Given the apprehension of losing India to an outside power, French before and Russians later, Britain had to fight three consecutive wars with Afghanistan. The Russian fear had been the determining factor in British India policy with respect to Central Asia. 'I should desire nothing better" wrote Lytton to Rawlinson, "than an early war with Russia, whose diplomacy I dread more than her arms".'[46]

The First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842):

The basis of conflict with Afghanistan could be seen in the overall colonial paradigm and Britain's desire to secure Afghanistan from external interference. They wanted a loyal ruler on the throne of Kabul and Dost Mohammad Khan was not to their liking because he did not allow the British envoy to be stationed at Kabul and had tried to establish relationship with Czarist Russia. This was an alarming situation for those who believed in the 'Forward Policy' and in the creation of a scientific border. Lord Auckland, Governor General of India, presented his Simla Manifesto which outlined the advantages of armed confrontation with the Afghans. As a result they escorted Shah Shuja, who was staying with them in India as a guest to Afghanistan. The Army of Indus crossed the Provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan because Peshawar was under the Sikh control and they could not access Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass. The British forces entered Kandahar after months of marching towards Kabul. Dost Mohammad offered tough resistance but Shah Shuja was ultimately installed who did not last long. It is a known fact that out of the departing sixteen thousand military personnel only one Dr. Brydon, with a few others, mostly women, taken hostage by Akbar Khan, Dost Mohammad Khan's son, survived. Dr. Brydon, was the only person who could make it to Jalalabad which was in the British control.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880):

In a revengeful act, the British gathered more forces and entered Kabul where they played havoc with the life and property and restored Dost Muhammad to the throne of Kabul till such time they attacked Afghanistan once more in 1878, what is known to history, as the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878 – 1880). The reason, yet again was Amir Sher Ali's rapprochement with the Russians and a sequel to the ***Great Game*** power politics. However, this time too, the British face humiliation and defeat.

The Third Anglo-Afghan War (1915):

This is actually an Afghan initiated conflict and Amir Amanullah Khan, faced internal problems particularly the resistance from the Afghans to his reform agenda and modernization initiatives, and therefore decided to wage

Jihad against the infidels. It was a very short war in comparison to the two previous ones, at the end of which, though the Afghan army was defeated yet Amanullah (1892-1960) succeeded to restore sovereignty to his country by declaring independence of its foreign policy from the British.

The main thrust of the British Frontier Policies was to ensure the establishment of buffer zones between Russia and India in Central Asia, Persia, Tibet and Afghanistan. When actual occupation and intervention was not required, neutral zone or buffer states were created by contending parties to mutual benefit. 'Britain's policy regarding Central Asia, on the other hand, aimed at making Afghanistan a buffer state between the Russian and the British possessions in the East with permanent British influence in Afghanistan.'[47] Meddling in Afghanistan diplomatically and also by espionage and sending agents did not help the British in the final analysis, forcing it to militarily intervene. In fact both cold war tactics and bloody conflicts continued during the period which resulted in the emergence of Afghanistan as an independent, neutral and buffer state.

> Once more the military problems in Afghanistan appeared to be solved; and it was the turn of the political problems. The war had not halted the Russians nor diminished their threat in any way. As a buffer between the great empires of Russia and Britain, Afghanistan was probably less effective than it had ever been.'[48] 'Nevertheless, Russia did not want Afghanistan transformed from a buffer state into an avant-grade of the Indian Empire.[49]

Afghanistan in the *Great Game:*

Colonial push by Russia and Britain, led to meddling in Afghanistan, which both considered an important strategic outpost. They scrambled to secure it as their sphere of influence. However, Britain, seeing its diplomacy failing went into armed conflict with Afghanistan in 1838 and 1878, respectively, and by 1907, as a result of the Anglo Russian Convention, Afghanistan emerged as a buffer state between the two giants. About this time, Kipling wrote *Kim* (1901), with the Great Game at its centre. 'The question of Afghanistan, the linchpin of India's defense, and whose side it would take if there was a war over India.'[50] Afghanistan remained a pivot connecting India with the Russian colonies of the ex-Khanates. The British, in no way, wanted to get Afghanistan out of its fold and took all possible measures to secure its diplomatic clout there. The Russian attempted but at the end of the day, accepted the British position in 1907.

The Gilgit Game:

The Gilgit Chitral region was an important Great Game theatre and in *Kim*, we find several references to these places. To defend India from outside interference British foreign policy makers demanded invasion and control of these territories. Resultantly, Gilgit-Baltistan was captured and Russian influence there was checked. Rudyard Kipling too, had this in mind when he planted a

Lama as a virtual Great Gamer, who thanks, to Kim, remained unawake till the end of the act.

> One area the Viceroy was particularly anxious about was Sinkiang where the Russians appeared to have stolen a considerable march on the British. Under the Treaty of St. Petersburg, which had restored Kuldja or Ili to China, the latter had agreed to the Russians having a council in Kashgar.[51]

As mentioned earlier, spies and political agents were sent by the two empires to secure their interests in the Chinese Turkistan. 'Nikolai Petrovsky. a Militant Anglophobe had vowed at all costs to keep the British out of Sinkiang both politically and commercially.'[52] 'Known as Chin-Bagh, or Chinese Garden, this was eventually to become the British consulate and an important listening-post during the closing years of the Anglo-Russian struggle. It was also to be George McCartney's home for the next twenty-six years.' The Gilgit Agency was established in 1877 comprising of Hunza, Yaseen and Chilas with a view to protect India from possible Russian invasion from the North. China however was not a security threat during the *Great Game.*

The *Great Game* Gets Hot:

Like Afghanistan, Kashgharia also proved to be a hot spot in the context imperial conflict and had been a Chinese colony despite, wars with its Muslim rulers, most importantly with *Yaqub Beg.*[53]'Kashgharia was considered as the future market for English commerce. This market was lost when Russia imposed its terms on the ruler of that state.'[54] 'The Government of India itself was keen to promote both commercial and political relations with the ruler of Kashgharia'[55]. To oversee British trade relations with Kashghar. 'A Central Asian Trading Company was formed by some of the civil servants and wealthy natives in 1874, with exclusive object of monopolizing Kashgharian trade.'[56]The conflict in Kashgharia was a bloody and atrocious one much like wars with Afghanistan.

> Yaqub Beg had managed to wrest Kashghar and Yarkand from both the Chinese and his local rivals. The two Chinese Governors, it is said, chose to blow themselves up rather than surrender to the Muslims. According to one colourful, but unsubstantiated account, Kashgar defenders had eaten their own wives and children before submitting, having first devoured every four-legged creature in the city, including cats and rats. [57]

Yaqub Beg in his capacity of the undisputed leader of the area, capitalizes on the situation very well.

> After half a century, the forebodings of men like Wilson, Moorcroft, de Lacy Evans and Kinneir were beginning to look ominously justified.... It soon became clear, moreover, that Yaqub Beg was merely stringing his two powerful neighbours along, exploiting their mutual jealousies to safeguard his own position. After all, an oriental could play the Great Game too. The most vulnerable of the passes, they learned, were the

Baroghil and the Ishkaman, a hundred miles or so north-west of Gilgit.[58]

Conclusion:

The preceding analysis of *Kim*, with its central theme of *Great Game*, and the mission to Himalayas to sabotage Russian designs on India, is quite relevant when seen in today's political and strategic environment. Afghanistan is once again in the thick of things, and conflict doesn't show any sign of stopping anytime soon. The reality of present day security situations and big powers rivalry is a throwback to the power tussle of yesteryears, which Kipling in his masterpiece novel attempts to glorify it. The romance as well as the brutality of the 19th Century colonial contest is with us in all its manifestations. In this respect, Kipling's insight on the whole matrix of powerplay is quite fresh whether we like it or not.

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[1]*Ibid Ch.9* p.145

[2]*Ibid* *Ch:*2, p.191

[3]*Ibid* *Ch*:12, p.202

[4]*Ibid*

[5]*Ibid* *Ch*:13, P-227

[6]*Ibid* *Ch*:14, P-235

[7]*Ibid* *Ch.*12, p.202

[8] Amir of Afghanistan during the *Great Game*, launched by the British after the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838).He was a weak ruler and despite British support could not stop Dost Muhammad from coming to power.

[9] A powerful Afghan Emir who fought the British and after taking refuge with the Emir of Bukhara came back and ruled the country from 1826 to 1863.

[10] Kipling,*Kim, Ch:2*,p.38

[11]*Ibid Ch:14*,p.232

[12] http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415316385/ accessed on 01.07.2010

[13]Anwar Khan, *England, Russian and Central Asia, op.cit* p.30

[14] Arthur Swinson,*North-West Frontier People and Events 1839-1947* (California: Hutchison, 1976) . p.198

[15]*Ibid* p.33

[16] Sayyed Qassem Reshtia, *Between the Two Giants, Political History of Afganistan in the 19th Century* (Peshawar:University Book, 1990) p.327

[17] Anwar Khan, England, Russia and Central Asia,*op.cit* p.13

[18]*Ibid* p.64

[19]*Ibid* p. 199

[20] http://centralasia.foreignpolicyblogs.com/category/central_asia-general/tsarist-era Retrieved on 25/10/2007 (p.1).

[21] Robert Middleton, Tajikistan & the High Pamirs, A Companion and Guide (Odyssey Illustrated Guides) Paperback – June 23, 2008http://www.amazon.com/Tajikistan-The-High-Pamirs-Illustrated/dp/9622177735 accessed 6.10.2010

[22]*Ibid,* p.1

[23]*Ibid,* p. 6

[24]*Ibid,* p. 8

[25] Hopkirk, *TheGreat Game , On Secret Seen In High Asiaop.cit, pp. 4-5*

[26]*Ibid* p.7

[27]*Ibid op.cit* p. 3.

[28]*Ibid* p.155

[29]Arthur Swinson, *The North-West Frontier, People and Events. 1839-1947*(California: Hutchinson, 1967)p.35

[30] Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, *op.cit* p.447

[31]*Ibid*p.451

[32]*Ibid* p.450

[33]*Ibid* p.451

[34]*Ibid* p.524

[35]*Ibid*

[36]*Ibid* p.5

[37]*Ibid op.cit* p.7

[38]*Ibid* p.3

[39] Rosanne Klass(ed), *Afghanistan the Great Game Revisited,* Yossef Bodansky article 'SovietMilitary Operations in Afghanistan' p.275

[40]*Ibid*

[41] Anwar Khan, *England, Russia and Central Asia*, *op.cit* p. 306

[42]*Ibid*

[43] Rishtia, *Between the Lion and the Bear,* o*p.cit* p. 375

[44] Anwar Khan, England,Russia and Central Asia,*op.cit* p. 308

[45] Swinson, *North West Frontier*, *People and Events,* p. 266.

[46] Anwar Khan, *England, Russia and Central Asia*, *op.cit* p. 237

[47] Anwar Khan, *England, Russia and Central Asia,op.cit* p. 307-308

[48] Swinson, *North-West Frontier*, p. 193

[49]Colin C.Davies, *The Problem of North, West Frontier 1890-1908, With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (London: Curzon Press, 1975)p. 172.

[50] Hopkirk, *The Great Game, op.cit* p.456

[51]*Ibid*, p. 434

[52]*Ibid*

[53] He was the most important leader of Kashgir/Kashgiria,thepresent day Xinxiag Ughure Autonomist Region of China,who fought against China several times.

[54] Anwar Khan, *England, Russia and Central Asia, op.cit* p. 180

[55]*Ibid* p. 181

[56]*Ibid* p. 183

[57] Hopkirk, *The Great Game, op.cit* p. 322

[58]*Ibid* pp. 352-54